DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 121 930 UD 015 991

TITLE Facts on Women Workers of Minority Races. [Revised Version, May 1975].
INSTITUTION Employment Standards Administration (DOL), Washington, D.C. Women's Bureau.
PUB DATE May 75
NOTE 10p.; For June 1970 data, see ED 065 661
AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent of Documents; U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock No. 029-016-00029-1; $0.35)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS American Indians; Asian Americans; Cultural Factors; Dropouts; Economically Disadvantaged; Economic Climate; Economic Disadvantagement; Economic Factors; Economic Opportunities; Economic Status; Educational Background; Employment Opportunities; Employment Problems; Employment Trends; Ethnic Groups; *Females; Heads of Households; Housewives; Labor Force; Marital Status; *Minority Groups; Mothers; Negroes; *Social Factors; Socioeconomic Status; Spanish Speaking; *Statistical Data; Unemployed; *Working Women

ABSTRACT

Data provided in this study encompass topics such as: labor force participation, unemployment, marital status, women heads of families, working mothers, the children of working mothers, education, employment status of high school dropouts, occupations, full-time and full-year workers, and earnings. Minority workers (data refers to all races other than white), are being seriously affected by the current economic recession. Their unemployment rates, like those of white workers, have increased steadily. Moreover, the gap between the unemployment rates of minority and white workers has widened. In addition to the higher unemployment rates of minority women workers, these women suffer other disadvantages in the labor market, which have lessened over the last decade or so. Despite advances, minority women are more likely than white women to be in low-skilled, low-wage occupations. Even when they are fully employed, their earnings continue to be lower than those of white women or minority men or white men. Women of minority races are more likely than white women to be in the labor force (includes employed and unemployed persons) and to be working wives and mothers. They are also more likely to be heads of families. Although they still have slightly less formal education than white women workers, the gap in educational attainment between the two groups has been sharply reduced in recent years. (Author/AM)

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ED121930

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EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ADMINISTRATION
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FACTS ON WOMEN WORKERS OF MINORITY RACES

Minority workers are being seriously affected by the current economic recession. Their unemployment rates, like those of white workers, have increased steadily. Moreover, the gap between the unemployment rates of minority and white workers has widened.

During the first quarter of 1975, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of minority women workers 20 years of age and over averaged 11.0 percent--up from 7.9 percent in the first quarter of 1974--while the rate of white women rose from 4.7 percent to 7.8 percent. Minority men of the same age group had an unemployment rate of 11.1 percent during the first quarter of 1975, nearly double the 5.8 percent rate of white men. During the first quarter of 1974, the rate of minority men was 6.4 percent, compared with 3.1 percent for white men.

Minority teenagers 16 to 19 years of age experienced even more severe effects of the economic situation, with an unemployment rate of 39.8 percent in the first quarter of 1975, compared with 18.0 percent for white teenagers. During the corresponding quarter of 1974, the rates of minority and white teenagers were 30.4 and 13.2 percent, respectively.

In addition to the higher unemployment rates of minority women workers, these women suffer other disadvantages in the labor market. However, over the last decade or so, these disadvantages have lessened as minority women's occupational distribution and earnings have improved. For example, between 1960 and 1974, the proportion of minority women workers employed in professional and technical jobs rose from 7 to 12 percent; in clerical jobs, it rose from 9 to 25 percent. Over the same 14-year period, the proportion in private household work decreased from 35 to 11 percent. Moreover, the median wage or salary income of minority women who were employed full time the year round rose from $2,372 in 1960 to $5,772 in 1973. Even in 1960 constant dollars, this was an increase of 62 percent.

Note.--Data for minority races refer to all races other than white. Negroes constituted 89 percent of persons other than white in the United States in 1970; Orientals, 8 percent; and American Indians, 3 percent. Spanish-origin persons are generally included in the white population--about 93 percent of the Spanish-origin population is white.

Data are from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

US 015991

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Despite these advances, minority women are more likely than white women to be in low-skilled, low-wage occupations. Even when minority women are fully employed, their earnings continue to be lower than those of white women or minority or white men. Women of minority races are more likely than white women to be in the labor force* and to be working wives and working mothers. Minority women workers also are more likely to be heads of families. Although they still have slightly less formal education than white women workers, the gap in educational attainment between the two groups has been sharply reduced in recent years.

Labor Force Participation

In 1974 there were 4.6 million minority women 16 years of age and over in the civilian labor force. They accounted for 11 percent of all women in the population and for 13 percent of the women workers. Among all minority women, about 49 percent were workers, as compared with 45 percent of the white women. The labor force participation rate of minority women was highest among those 35 to 44 years of age; the rate of white women was highest in the 20- to 24-year-age group.

The proportion of minority women in the labor force exceeded that of white women in all age groups above 25 years. The difference was greatest among women 25 to 34 years of age, where 61 percent of minority women were workers, compared with 51 percent of white women. The situation was reversed, however, among women 16 to 24 years of age. In these age groups, the labor force participation rates of minority women were lower than those of white women. The difference was most pronounced among young women aged 16 and 17; less than one-fourth of these minority women were in the labor force, while more than two-fifths of the white women were workers.

PERCENT OF PERSONS IN CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, BY AGE, SEX, AND RACE, 1974

Age	Women		Men	
	Minority	White	Minority	White
Total 16 years and over	49.1	45.2	73.3	79.4
16 and 17 years	24.2	43.3	34.6	53.3
18 and 19 years	44.6	60.4	62.4	73.6
20 to 24 years	58.2	63.8	82.1	86.5
25 to 34 years	60.8	51.1	93.2	96.3
35 to 44 years	61.5	53.7	90.9	96.7
45 to 54 years	56.9	54.3	84.7	93.0
55 to 64 years	43.5	40.4	70.2	78.1
65 years and over	10.0	8.0	21.7	22.5
18 to 64 years	56.4	52.9	83.6	89.9

*Includes employed and unemployed persons.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate of minority women workers in 1974 was 10.7 percent. It was considerably higher than the 6.1 percent rate of white women workers.

Minority teenage girls continued to experience severe unemployment in 1974. Their rate of 34.6 percent was nearly 2½ times that of white teenage girls and 3 percentage points above the unusually high rate of 31.6 percent for minority teenage boys.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, BY RACE, AGE, AND SEX, 1973 AND 1974

Race and age	Women		Men	
	1974	1973	1974	1973
Minority:				
Total 16 years and over	10.7	10.5	9.1	7.6
16 to 19 years	34.6	34.5	31.6	26.9
20 years and over	8.4	8.2	6.8	5.7
White:				
Total 16 years and over	6.1	5.3	4.3	3.7
16 to 19 years	14.5	13.0	13.6	12.3
20 years and over	5.0	4.3	3.5	2.9

Marital Status

Nearly half of the minority women workers in March 1974 were married and living with their husbands. Thirty-one percent were widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands, and the remaining 23 percent were single. In contrast, among white women workers, three-fifths were married and living with their husbands, 23 percent were single, and 17 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated.

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE, BY MARITAL STATUS AND RACE, MARCH 1974

Marital status	Minority		
	Number (in thousands)	Percent distribution	As percent of women in population
Total	4,512	100.0	48.2
Single	1,026	22.7	44.1
Married (husband present)	2,100	46.5	52.1
Widowed, divorced, or separated	1,386	30.7	46.1
	White		
Total	30,808	100.0	44.8
Single	7,204	23.4	59.7
Married (husband present)	18,267	59.3	42.2
Widowed, divorced, or separated	5,337	17.3	39.8

Minority women with husbands present were more likely to be in the labor force than were single women or those who were widowed, divorced, or separated. Among white women, those with husbands present were less likely to be in the labor force than were single women, but slightly more likely than those who were widowed, divorced, or separated.

Women Heads of Families

In March 1974 there were 2.0 million families headed by women of minority races. They accounted for 29 percent of the 6.8 million families headed by women. Among all families of minority races, nearly one-third were headed by women. One out of 10 white families was headed by a woman.

Minority families headed by women were more than twice as likely to have incomes below the low-income or poverty level 1/ as similar white families--51 and 25 percent, respectively, in 1973. Among families headed by women who worked full time the year round, the incidence of low income was nearly five times greater for minority families than for white families--19 and 4 percent, respectively.

1/ The low-income or poverty level is based on the Social Security Administration's poverty thresholds, adjusted annually in accordance with the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index. Classified as poor in 1973 were those nonfarm households where total money income was less than $2,247 for an unrelated individual; $2,895 for a couple; and $4,540 for a family of four. (The poverty level for farm families is set at 85 percent of the corresponding level for nonfarm families.)

For those families headed by women who had no work experience during the year, 70 percent of minority families and 38 percent of white families had incomes below the low-income level.

WORK EXPERIENCE IN 1973 OF WOMEN HEADS OF FAMILIES WITH INCOMES BELOW THE LOW-INCOME LEVEL, BY RACE

Race	Total	No work experience	Worked during year	Worked year round full time
	Number of poor families headed by women			
Total	2,193,000	1,340,000	852,000	157,000
Minority	1,003,000	626,000	376,000	98,000
White	1,190,000	714,000	476,000	59,000
	As percent of all families headed by women			
Total	32.2	48.4	21.1	7.2
Minority	51.4	70.4	35.4	19.0
White	24.5	37.9	16.0	3.6

Working Mothers

Minority mothers in the labor force in March 1974 totaled 2.1 million, or 15 percent of all working mothers. Sixty-one percent of minority women with children 6 to 17 years of age were workers, as were more than half (52 percent) of those with children under 6. The comparable figures for white women were 53 and 34 percent, respectively.

Among minority mothers, labor force participation rates were similar for those who were married with husbands present and those who were widowed, divorced, or separated. On the other hand, the labor force participation rate of white mothers with husbands present was significantly lower than that of white mothers without husbands present.

PERCENT OF MOTHERS IN LABOR FORCE, BY RACE, AGE OF CHILDREN, AND MARITAL STATUS OF MOTHER, MARCH 1974

Race and age of children	All ever-married	Married (husband present)	Other marital status
Minority:			
Total	56.2	56.3	55.9
Children 6 to 17 years	60.5	61.0	59.8
Children under 6 years	51.9	52.4	50.9
White:			
Total	44.3	41.7	64.5
Children 6 to 17 years	52.9	50.3	70.1
Children under 6 years	34.2	32.2	55.0

The labor force participation rate of mothers with husbands present rose sharply during the 1964-74 decade (1964 data are not available for mothers without husbands present). The increase was most substantial--24 percentage points--among minority mothers with children under 6 years of age.

Children of Working Mothers

There were 26.8 million own children under age 18 of working mothers in March 1974. About 4.5 million, or 17 percent, of these children were of minority races. More than 1 out of 4 of the minority children (more than 1 out of 5 white children) was under 6 years of age.

Approximately 1.5 million minority children and 3.1 million white children had working mothers who were family heads. The proportion of minority children whose working mothers were family heads was nearly 2½ times higher than that of white children--33 and 14 percent, respectively.

NUMBER OF OWN CHILDREN OF WORKING MOTHERS, BY RACE, TYPE OF FAMILY, AND AGE OF CHILDREN, MARCH 1974

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and type of family	Total children under 18 years	Children under 6 years	Children 6 to 17 years
Minority	4,476	1,144	3,332
Husband-wife family	2,997	827	2,170
Female-head family	1,479	317	1,162
White	22,292	4,942	17,350
Husband-wife family	19,168	4,346	14,822
Female-head family	3,124	596	2,528

Education

Most minority women workers are high school graduates. In March 1974, 61 percent had graduated from high school, including 10 percent who had completed 4 or more years of college. The comparable figures for white women were 75 and 14 percent, respectively.

The median 12.3 years of schooling for minority women workers in 1974 was nearly 3 years higher than the median in 1959. Both women and men of minority races are narrowing the education gap between themselves and their white counterparts.

MEDIAN YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY WORKERS, BY SEX AND RACE, MARCH 1959 AND 1974 1/

Date	Women		Men	
	Minority	White	Minority	White
March 1959	9.4	12.2	8.3	11.9
March 1974	12.3	12.5	12.1	12.5

1/ Persons 16 years of age and over in 1974 but 18 years and over in 1959.

Employment Status of High School Dropouts

High school dropouts are seriously disadvantaged in the labor market. In October 1973 there were 355,000 minority women 16 to 21 years of age who had left school before completing high school. Their unemployment rate was 37.5 percent. In contrast, among the more than 1.2 million white women of this age group who had dropped out of school, the unemployment rate was much lower--17.0 percent.

The rate among minority women in this age group who had graduated was somewhat lower but still excessively high at 23.3 percent and, in fact, exceeded the rate for white women dropouts. The rate for white women high school graduates was 7.7 percent. It is obvious that discrimination remains a serious threat to young minority women seeking employment.

Many women dropouts were married and thus had family responsibilities which kept them out of the labor force. Other factors such as geographic location and inexperience may also have been deterrents to those who might otherwise have sought employment.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES NOT ENROLLED IN COLLEGE AND DROPOUTS AGED 16 TO 21 YEARS, BY SEX AND RACE, OCTOBER 1972

Sex and race	Graduates not enrolled in college		Dropouts	
	Labor force participation rate	Unemployment rate	Labor force participation rate	Unemployment rate
Women:				
Total	74.0	9.4	39.3	21.2
Minority	63.1	23.3	36.1	37.5
White	75.5	7.7	40.2	17.0
Men:				
Total	93.1	6.9	84.1	15.5
Minority	92.2	13.0	81.8	22.6
White	93.2	6.1	84.6	13.6

Occupations

Minority women workers were more heavily concentrated in private household work and service work than were white women--37 and 19 percent, respectively. In contrast, a larger proportion of white women were in professional, technical, or managerial jobs and clerical jobs than were minority women--57 percent as compared with 39 percent.

MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUPS OF EMPLOYED WOMEN,
BY RACE, 1960 AND 1974 1/

Selected major occupation group	1974		1960	
	Minority	White	Minority	White
Number (in thousands)	4,136	29,281	2,821	19,376
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical workers	11.7	15.4	6.9	13.1
Nonfarm managers and administrators	2.4	5.3	1.8	5.4
Clerical workers	24.9	36.4	9.3	32.9
Sales workers	2.7	7.4	1.5	8.5
Operatives (including transport)	17.2	12.3	14.1	15.1
Service workers (except private household)	26.1	16.7	21.4	13.7
Private household workers	11.3	2.5	35.1	6.1
Other occupations	3.7	4.1	10.8	5.2

1/ Women 16 years of age and over in 1974 but 14 years and over in 1960.

The occupational distribution of minority women in 1974 also differed from that of minority men. Although 42 percent of the women were white-collar workers, three-fifths were in clerical jobs, which paid less on the average than minority men earned in factory jobs. Only 24 percent of minority men were white-collar workers, but an additional 16 percent were skilled craft and kindred workers. In contrast to 17 percent of the women, 26 percent of the men were operatives (mostly factory workers). Thirty-seven percent of the women but only 15 percent of the men were service workers.

Full-Time and Full-Year Workers

Most women workers are employed full time (35 hours or more a week). The proportion of minority women workers so employed in 1974 was slightly higher than that of white women workers. About 76 percent of minority women and 71 percent of white women employed in nonagricultural industries were on full-time schedules.

There is likewise a difference between the proportions of minority and white women who worked a full year. Among the women who worked at some time during 1973, 62 percent of minority and 58 percent of white women worked 50 to 52 weeks either full or part time; 45 percent of minority and 42 percent of white women worked full time the year round.

Earnings

The earnings of minority women, like those of white women, are substantially less than the earnings of men, either minority or white. In addition, fully employed minority women continue to earn less than white women, although the earnings gap has narrowed appreciably. In 1973 women of minority races who worked the year round at full time jobs had a median wage or salary income of $5,772--only 88 percent of that of white women, 69 percent of that of minority men, and 50 percent of that of white men. In 1960 the corresponding proportions were 70, 63, and 42 percent.

MEDIAN WAGE OR SALARY INCOME IN 1973, BY RACE AND SEX

Race	All workers		Year-round full-time workers	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total	$4,378	$9,623	$6,448	$11,306
Minority	3,978	6,927	5,772	8,363
White	4,441	9,969	6,544	11,633

The earnings of married women make a substantial contribution to total family income. Nonfarm minority wives who worked in 1973 contributed a median of 31 percent to family income; for white wives, the median was 26 percent.

* * * * * * * * * * *

High unemployment rates and low wages are sharp reminders that minority women as a group are still very vulnerable to economic changes, despite improvement during recent years in their educational attainment and occupational status. Teenagers entering the labor force are particularly susceptible to changes in labor market conditions. In addition, the incomes of minority women and the economic plight of those women who are heads of families show the need for increased stress on providing equal employment and training opportunities and employment services for minority women.

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